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May 25, 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Indian Proposal for a World-Wide Moratorium on Nuclear Weapons Tests

The following estimate of the Director of Central Intelligence is forwarded in response to NSC Action No. 1106 h of 6 May. No attempt has been made to estimate the effect of the proposed moratorium upon the US nuclear program or upon the relative military capabilities of the US and the USSR.

I. THE REACTIONS OF THE NON-COMMUNIST WORLD

1. The immediate reaction of the great majority of the governments and peoples of the non-Communist world would be one of approval and support for any world-wide moratorium on nuclear tests. The governments of most of our NATO allies would favor the proposal and would privately urge the US to accept it. A summary refusal by either the US or the USSR would be strongly criticized. There would also be serious criticism of any country that carried out nuclear tests during discussion of the proposed moratorium.

2. If the US accepted such a proposal, the governments and peoples of the non-Communist world would consider it strong evidence against Communist charges that the US seeks to terrorize and dominate the world. This reaction would be even more favorable if the USSR staged nuclear tests after the proposal had been made.

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3. As discussion developed about the proposal, there would almost certainly be a growing feeling throughout the non-Communist world that the moratorium would have little value unless it constituted the first step toward a world-wide agreement restricting or prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons. Communist and fellow-travelling organizations in the non-Communist world would claim that a US acceptance of the offer represented a victory for "popular resentment" against the US "war-mongers," and would hail this "victory" as but a step toward banning nuclear weapons. Non-Communist left-wing groups would independently take the same line. Thus, the US would be under strong popular pressure to "ban the bomb."

4. The Indian Government would probably consider that a US acceptance of their proposal was an admission of the correctness of Indian criticism of the March tests. At any international conference called to discuss the proposal, India would probably seek to expand the moratorium into an agreement banning the production and use of nuclear weapons. Such an Indian initiative to expand the moratorium would be supported by some non-Communist governments.

II. THE COMMUNIST REACTION

5. The Communist leaders would probably signify their general approval of the objectives of the Indian proposal as being in line with their "desire" to ban nuclear weapons but would not commit themselves to its acceptance or rejection. If the US rejected the proposal, they would claim that this was proof of US aggressive intentions. If the US accepted the proposal, they probably would consider the following factors before making their official reply:

a. US motives in supporting the proposal. Communist leaders would probably estimate:

(1) That the US hoped to obtain a positive political and propaganda advantage and at the same time to deflate the Communist "peace" campaign.

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(2) That the US hoped that a moratorium would cripple or at least hamper Soviet weapons development, at a time when US research and development had achieved certain established goals.

(3) That the US, disturbed by the protests over the March nuclear weapons tests, the growing strength of the campaign to prohibit nuclear weapons, and strains upon the alliance, had felt forced to accept the proposal.

b. The Monitoring and Policing Problem. Though the Kremlin is probably well aware that the US has substantial capabilities for detecting Soviet nuclear tests, it might believe that strict adherence to the moratorium would be unnecessary. It probably believes that US surveillance involves the use of information and techniques which the US would not wish to disclose, and that the evidence or proof of tests derived through these techniques might not be convincing to all non-Communist governments.

c. Effects of a Moratorium on Communist and Western Military Capabilities. The Kremlin almost certainly estimates that it will need to stage a few weapons tests reasonably soon in order to incorporate recent research work into more advanced and efficient weapons. However, the Kremlin probably believes that, in general, numerous weapons tests are more important for the US nuclear program than they are for the Soviet program. It almost certainly believes that nuclear weapons, especially those for strategic use, play a more important role in Western military strategy than they do in present Communist military strategy. Therefore, provided the USSR completes its next series of tests, which may well occur this summer, the Kremlin would probably estimate that a moratorium on weapons tests would not for the time being impair Soviet capabilities more than it would those of the US.

d. Political Effects of a Moratorium. The Kremlin would probably estimate that it could incorporate the Indian proposal into its "peace" campaign and (with left-wing and neutralist support) could convert it into the standard Soviet proposal to

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ban nuclear weapons. The Kremlin would estimate that many peoples and some governments would approve such a ban, and that, if the US should oppose the ban, the US would lose the advantage gained from supporting the original Indian proposal.

6. Probable Communist Courses of Action

a. Behind a screen of propaganda, the Kremlin would probably seek to delay formal international discussion of the proposal until any tests which it may have scheduled had been completed. The Kremlin would then probably agree to attend a conference on the proposal.

b. In the end, the Kremlin probably would either (1) accept a brief moratorium, on condition that the conference discuss plans for banning nuclear weapons or (2) put forth a counter-proposal of its own, reiterating its proposals for the abolition of nuclear weapons and for an international agreement controlling the production of nuclear materials.

c. Having completed its 1954 tests, the Kremlin would have no reason to violate a moratorium until such time as the Soviet research program had progressed to the point where new tests would be desirable -- approximately one year. Its decision then would depend upon the political situation throughout the world and upon its estimate of the advantages it would gain from violating or denouncing the moratorium. In any case, the Kremlin would continue research in and production of all types and sizes of weapons.

d. In general, the reaction of the Kremlin would be conditioned by the nature of the US reaction to the Indian proposal and it would maneuver in the endeavor to force the US to show its hand first.

Signed

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